



Photographs by Nancy Siesel/The New York Times

VOWS

Tiffany Ellis and Calvin Butts IV

By LOIS SMITH BRADY

GROWING up in Pittsburgh, Tiffany Anne Ellis, her sister, Monica, and their mother, Marlene, were known among friends as the Ellis Girls. They always wore matching hairdos and color-coordinated clothes like backup singers in a band. (The sisters' father, a saxophonist, died in 1989.)

Today they are still a threesome, passionate about clothes, church, Michael Jackson, "Guiding Light," good manners and inventive hair. Tiffany and Monica live together in a Harlem brownstone, and on many weekends their mother arrives from Pittsburgh bearing gifts: new shoes, steaks and even a refrigerator once.

Tiffany Ellis, 33, has a personality like a hot-pink tutu. "She works hard, she's full of life, she's peppy," said her friend André Leon Talley, the editor at large at Vogue magazine. "She invites people to her home and the tables are groaning with food. Tiffany's greatest joy is to have a feast of family and food at her home. She's really a family girl."

Ms. Ellis, the director of marketing and public relations at Aaron Davis Hall, a performing arts center at the City College of New York, first met Calvin Otis Butts IV three years ago. Both attend services every Sunday at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Ms. Ellis sits in the pews with her sister, their clothes and graceful spirits matching perfectly. Mr. Butts, who sings in the choir, is the eldest son of the church's quietly charismatic pastor, the Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III.

Mr. Butts IV, also 33 and an advertising copywriter in New York for Grey Worldwide, is Ms. Ellis's opposite in every way. While she moves as if



NEW YORK, NOV. 27 Wynton Marsalis, above, accompanied the organist at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, as the bride walked down the aisle.

listening to pop songs, he walks as if he is hearing organ processions.

"He has quiet thunder," said Alexis Thomas, an Abyssinian church member. "He moves stealthily, powerfully, with a real in-charge attitude."

Ms. Ellis and Mr. Butts met on a chilly fall day in 2001. "I was standing outside the church, and he came up to me and said, 'Why are you standing out here without a coat on?'" Ms. Ellis recalled. "He said, 'You look like you need a hug.' Then he put me inside of his coat and he pulled me really close. I thought, 'Oh my goodness.'"

Still, it took him until the following fall to ask her out. Right away she liked his anchoring effect on her. "He was so calm, really chill," she said. "I'm very

emotional and hyper and he was like, 'Do you ever slow down? You should try it. It's a pretty cool thing.'"

By the fall of 2003 she was hoping for a marriage proposal, but she hid it from him like a run in her stockings.

"I didn't want to appear like I needed or wanted something from him that he wasn't willing to offer," she said. "Of course, I regularly reminded him of how wonderful I was."

When he proposed last New Year's Eve, it was in the middle of a big family feast at her brownstone. She sobbed, yes.

Several of her friends described it as a Cinderella moment. "When Tiffany introduced Calvin Butts to me, I knew she had moved into royalty," said Alvin McCray, a friend from the University of Pittsburgh. "It was what she always wanted. The princess had come to roost."

On Nov. 27 the bride walked with her mother down the aisle of the Abyssinian church, wearing a smile bigger than Julia Roberts's and dressed in a Vera Wang gown with a skirt as wide as an igloo. Her hair was pulled back Audrey Hepburn style. Earrings shaped like bows swayed and flashed under her veil.

"She's like, 'I am Mrs. Calvin O. Butts and I look good!'" Mr. Talley said.

The ceremony, led by the bridegroom's father, was filled with music. At the beginning, Wynton Marsalis accompanied the organist; and throughout, the church choir rocked.

The bride's sister, who looks like a model but is actually a bassoonist, played with her group, the Imani Winds. She also cried throughout the ceremony. For once, the two sisters were not dressed alike.